**POSTER**

**Harvest Trends of Light Geese in the Regular Hunting Season and Conservation Order in the Mississippi and Central Flyways, 1999-2014.**

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The mid-continent populations of lesser snow geese (*Chen caerulescens cearulescens*) and Ross’s geese (*C. rossii*) (hereinafter, light geese) have increased over the last thirty years. Damage to arctic and sub-arctic habitats by light geese initiated efforts to reduce population levels through regulations changes (e.g., daily bag limit) during regular hunting seasons and implementation of a light goose conservation order (LGCO) in the Mississippi (MF) and Central (CF) Flyways in 1999. However, declines in waterfowl hunter numbers may limit the effectiveness of these efforts. Thus, we examined current harvest and participation trends in the regular hunting season and LGCO since 1999. We used U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimates derived from the Harvest Information Program of goose hunters and harvest in the regular hunting season. For LGCO participants, we used estimates provided by state wildlife agencies derived from surveys of potential participants and their harvest. Approximately 550,000 goose hunters and over 75,000 individuals participated in the regular hunting season and LGCO, respectively, in 1999, and over 1.4 million light geese were harvested in the two flyways. Since 1999, participation during the regular season and the LGCO steadily declined. During the regular season, harvest has declined proportionately to participation but during the LGCO, harvest has steadily increased. Harvest per participant has decreased by 40% during the regular season but increased by more than 60% during the LGCO. To achieve sufficient harvest to meet population objectives, participation or increased hunter proficiency in harvesting light geese during the regular season needs to return to the levels similar to that 1999. However, other factors (i.e., reporting of harvest) may not accurately reflect current trends in participation and harvest of light geese. Although proficiency of harvesting light geese among LGCO participants appears to have increased, either increased participation or implementation of new measures would be needed to help meeting population reduction goals.

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